

Come and Get it!

Lewis Cozby
Mary Rose Lombardi
Teresa Smith

Grade Level: 1

Subject: Social Studies, U.S. History, Montana History

Description: The purpose of this lesson is to make students aware of the cowboy way of life.

Goals:

1. Students will gain an appreciation of the cowboy way of life during long trail drives during the years of 1866-1890.
2. Students will be introduced to the "Old Cowboy Cook."
3. Students will develop an understanding of the chuckwagon.

Objectives:

1. The students will develop a timeline of the day in the life of a chuckwagon cook.
2. The students will explain the significance of sourdough to the chuckwagon cook.
3. The students will make their own sourdough starter and biscuits.

Materials:

1. Picture
2. Colored pencils or markers
3. Several long rolls of paper (for timelines)
4. Activity sheet "Come and Get It"
5. Dutch oven (optional)
6. Sourdough starter supplies:
Baby food jars (one for each student)
Flour
Water
Salt
Butter
Baking soda
Spoons
Muffin tins

Vocabulary:

1. Cattle drive: The moving of a large group of cattle from one point to another that took at least a month in length.
2. Chuckwagon: the wagon, driven by the cook at round-up time and on trail drives, from which all of the meals were prepared and much of the equipment stored.
3. Cowboy: A young man, usually 17-25, that worked large numbers of cattle.
4. Dutch oven: A large heavy pot. Burning coals from the fire pit were placed under the Dutch oven and on top of the lid. Heat from the top and bottom helped to cook or bake the food evenly.

5. Keg: A wooden barrel where the sourdough starter was kept.
6. Sourdough: A type of bread or biscuit prepared without using commercial yeast. Many cowboy cooks were forced to make their own sourdough starter by allowing a mixture of flour and water to sour which resulted in the dough having a mildly sour flavor.
7. Trail Boss: The man hired to take charge of the men and the cattle during a trail drive. Each day he rode ahead of the herd in order to choose the best route for the cattle and the best place to bed down at night. Once the crew arrived at the cattle town, he was responsible for selling the cattle and paying the cowhands.

Procedure:

1. Start by holding the picture in front of the children. Move the picture quickly in front of the children and ask them to tell you what they remember about the picture. Have them name the different jobs they saw in the picture (Trail boss, Cook, Wrangler and Cowboy).
 2. Describe what was in the picture, having the children contribute what they remember. Try to get the children to picture in their heads what a cowboy camp was like in the time of the trail drives.
 3. Using the picture, explain to the children the job of each person. (Refer to the vocabulary list.)
 4. Getting Ready for a Trail Drive: Before the trail drive, the cook had to stock the wagon with enough food to last one or two months. He could not go shopping during the drive because the towns with stores were often too far away from the trails. The most important job the cook had to do before the drive was to prepare the sourdough starter for making bread. Starter is a water, sugar and flour mixture. The cook used this sticky paste to make bread. He scooped out some starter and added more water, flour, salt and baking soda. He kneaded or punched the dough, rolled it and put it into the Dutch oven to bake.
- A. Timeline Activity: Give the children a copy of "Cookie's Day." Have them pair off and explain that they will be making a timeline using the story of "Cookie's Day." They will need to read this with their partner and construct a timeline, getting the information from the story. Times and pictures are necessary.

Cookie's Day

Cookie's day began at around 3:30 in the morning. He would get up and start fixing the beef, sourdough bread or biscuits and dried fruit for the cowboy's breakfast. At 4:00 a.m., Cookie would wake the cowboys by yelling, "Come and get it!" Dishes would be "washed" with sand in the creek and camp packed up by 5:00a.m. Cookie would then head for the open prairie. Cookie would charge ahead of the cattle drive because he could move faster than the cattle with his 4-horse team. He had to make a new camp and have lunch ready by noon. Cookie fed the crew a meal such as chili or stew with bread, coffee and water. At 1:00p.m. the chuckwagon was packed again and headed toward the evening's campsite. By 5:00 Cookie had arrived at the night camp and a dinner of beans, beef, and potatoes and gravy was served at 6:30pm. For dessert, Cookie

served prune and raisin cobbler. Cookie went to bed at 9:00pm. He slept until morning because he did not have to take a turn herding the cattle at night.

B. Sourdough Bread Activity:

1. Individual Sourdough portions: Using baby food jars, fill the jar half way with lukewarm water and add 1/8 teaspoon yeast. Stir until yeast is dissolved. Slowly fill the rest of the jar with flour stirring constantly to prevent lumps. Stir mixture until it is smooth. Place a sheet of paper towel over the top and let sit in a warm place overnight.

2. Group instructions: mix 2 cups of flour, 2 cups of warm water and 1 yeast cake or package of dry yeast. Mix gently until smooth. Cover with a paper towel and let stand overnight in a warm place. By the next day, it should be bubbly with a pleasant yeasty smell.

3. Sourdough biscuits: Mix 1 cup of starter with 2 cups of flour to which has been blended 1 tsp. Of baking soda, 1 tsp salt and 1 tbs. melted butter, bacon fat or cooking oil. This should make a stiff dough, add more flour if too thin. Lightly knead forming biscuits and dropping them into a buttered muffin tin. Let rise and bake at 400 degrees until golden brown.

Closure and Evaluation: The students will present their timelines and enjoy their sourdough biscuits.

Expansion and Enrichment:

1. Build a chuck wagon with a wagon and boxes.
2. Read the poem, "Mornin' Business."
3. Keep a diary of a chuck wagon cook.
4. Visit the "Up a trail without a Lasso" site from Grant-Kohrs Ranch by Cheryl Knuchel, Shirley Peters, and Wristine Senecal.
5. Use the traveling trunk from Grant-Kohrs Historical Ranch
PO Box 790
Deer Lodge, MT 59722
(406)846-2070

Bibliography:

Adams, Ramon R. (1952). Come an' Get it: The Story of the Old Cowboy Cook. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma.

Freedman, Russell. (1985). Cowboys of the Wild West. Clarion Books. New York, NY.

Holm, Don. (1973). Old Fashioned Dutch Oven Cookbook. Caxton Printers, Ltd.: Caldwell, Idaho.

King, David C. (1998). Wild West Days: Discover the Past with Fun Projects, Games, Activities and

Recipes. John Wiley and Sons, Inc. New York, NY.